TWO LETTERS

Written by the Right Honourable

EDWARD Earl of CLARENDON,

late Lord High Chancellour of ENGLAND:

One to His Royal Highneſs the Duke of YORK:

The other to the DUTCHESS, his first Wife,

Occaſioned by Her embracing the Roman Catholick Religion.

SIR,

I Have not preſumed in any manner to approach Your Royal Preſence ſince I have been marked with the Brand of Baniſhment; And I would ſtill with the ſame awe forbear this Preſumption, if I did not believe my ſelf bound by all the obligations of Duty to make this Addreſs to You. I have been too much acquainted with the preſumption and impudence of the Times, in raiſing falſe and ſcandalous reproaches upon Innocent and Worthy Perſons of all Qualities and Degrees, to give credit to thoſe bold Whiſpers which have been too long ſcattered abroad concerning your Wives being ſhaken in her Religion: But when thoſe whiſpers break out into noiſe, and publick Perſons begin to report that the *Dutcheſs* is become a *Roman Catholick*: When I heard that many Worthy Perſons of unqueſtionable Devotion to your R. H are not without ſome fear and apprehenſion of it; and many Reflections are made from thence to the prejudice of your Royal Perſon, and even of the Kings Majeſties; I hope it may not misbecome me, at what diſtance ſoever, to caſt my ſelf at your Feet, and beſeech you to look to this matter in time, and to apply ſome Antidote to expel the Poiſon of it. It is not poſſible your R H. can be without Zeal, and Intire Devotion for that Church, for the Purity and Preſervation whereof your Bleſſed Father made himſelf a Sacrifice; and to the Reſtoration whereof You have contributed ſo much your ſelf, and which highly deſerves the Kings Protection and yours, ſince there can be no poſſible defection in the hearts of the People, whilſt due Reverence is made to the Church. Your Wife is ſo generally believed to have ſo perfect Duty, and Intire Reſignation to the Will of your H. that any defection in Her from her Religion, will be imputed to want of circumſpection in You, and not uſing your Authority; or to your connivance. I need not tell the ill conſequence that ſuch a mutation would be attended with, in reference to your R. H. and even to the King himſelf, whoſe greateſt ſecurity (under God,) is in the affection and Duty of his Proteſtant Subjects. Your R. H. well knows how far I have always been from wiſhing that the *Roman Catholicks* ſhould be proſecuted with ſeverity; but I leſs wiſh it ſhould ever be in their power to be able to proſecute thoſe who differ from them, ſince we well know how little moderation they would or could uſe.

And if this which People ſo much talk of, (I hope without ground,) ſhould fall out, it might very probably raiſe a greater ſtorm againſt the *Roman Catholicks* in general, than modeſt Men can wiſh; ſince after ſuch a breach, any Jealouſie of their preſumption would ſeem reaſonable. I have written to the *Dutcheſs* with the freedom and affection of a troubled and perplext Father. I do moſt humbly beſeech your R H. by your Authority to reſcue Her from bringing a Miſchief upon You and her ſelf, that never can be repaired; and to think it worthy Your Wiſdom to remove and diſpell thoſe reproaches (how falſe ſoever,) by better Evidence then Contempt, and hope You do believe that no ſeverity I have or can undergo, ſhall in any degree leſſen or diminiſh my moſt profound Duty to His Majeſty or Your R. H. but that I do with all imaginable Obedience ſubmit to Your good Pleaſure in all things;

God Preſerve Your R. H. and keep me in your favour,

Sir,

Your R. H. moſt Humble and Obedient Servant,

CLARENDON.

THE Earl of Clarendon's LETTER TO THE Dutcheſs of YORK.

YOu have much reaſon to believe that I have no mind to trouble you, or diſpleaſe you, eſpecially in an argument that is ſo unpleaſant and grievous to my ſelf; but as no diſtance of place that is between us, in reſpect of our Reſidence, or the greater diſtance in reſpect of the high condition you are in, can make me leſs your Father, or abſolve me from performing thoſe obligations which that Relation requires from me: So when I receive any Credible advertiſement of what reflects upon You, in point of Honour, Conſcience, or Diſcretion, I ought not to omit the informing You of it, or adminiſtring ſuch advice to You, as to my underſtanding ſeems reaſonable, and which I muſt ſtill hope will have ſome Credit with You: I will confeſs to You, that what You wrote to me many Months ſince, upon thoſe Reproaches which I told You were generally reported concerning Your defection in Religion, gave me ſo much ſatisfaction, that I believed them to proceed from that ill Spirit of the Time that delights in Slanders and Calumny; but I muſt tell You, the ſame Report increaſes of late very much, and I my ſelf ſaw a Letter the laſt week from *Paris*, from a perſon who ſaid the *Engliſh* Embaſſador aſſured him the day before, that the Dutcheſs was become a Roman Catholick; and which makes greater Impreſſion upon me, I am aſſured that many good men in *England*, who have great Affection for You and me, and who have thought nothing more impoſſible, then that there ſhould be ſuch a Change in You, are at preſent under much affliction, with the obſervation of a great Change in Your courſe, of Life and that conſtant Exerciſe of that Devotion which was ſo notorious; and do apprehend from Your frequent Diſcourſes, that you have not the ſame Reverence and Veneration, which You uſe to have, for the Church of *England*, the Church in which you were Baptized, and the Church the beſt Conſtituted, and the moſt free from Errors of any Chriſtian Church this day in the World; and that ſome perſons by their Inſinuations have prevailed with You to have a better Opinion of that which is moſt oppoſite to it, the Church of *Rome*, then the Integrity thereof deſerves. It is not yet in my power to believe that Your wit and underſtanding (with Gods bleſſing upon both) can ſuffer you to be ſhaken further then with Melancholick reflections upon the Iniquity and wickedneſs of the Age we live in, which diſcredits all Religion, and which with equal licenſe breaks into the Profeſſors of all, and prevails upon the members of all Churches, and whoſe Manners will have no benefit from the Faith of any Church.

I preſume You do not intangle Your ſelf in the particular Controverſies between the Romaniſts and us, or think Your ſelf a Competent Judge of all difficulties which occur therein; and therefore it muſt be ſome fallacious argument of Antiquity and Univerſality confidently urged by men who know leſs then many of thoſe You are acquainted with, and ought leſs to be believed by You, that can raiſe any doubts or ſcruples in You; and if You will with equal temper hear thoſe who are well able to inform You in all ſuch particulars, it is not poſſible for You to ſuck in that poiſon which can only

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corrupt and prevail over You, by ſtopping Your own Ears and ſhutting Your own Eyes. There are but two perſons in the World who have greater Authority with You then I can pretend to, and am ſure they both ſuffer more in this Rumour, and would ſuffer much more if there were ground for it, then I can do; and truly I am as unlikely to be deceived my ſelf, or to deceive You, as any man who endeavours to pervert You in Your Religion: And therefore I beſeech You let me have ſo much Credit with You, as to perſwade you to communicate any Doubts or Scruples which occur to You, before You ſuffer them to make too deep an Impreſſion upon You. The common Argument that there is no Salvation out of the Church, and that the Church of *Rome* is that only true Church, is both irrational and untrue; there are many Churches in which Salvation may be attained as well as in any one of them: And were many even in the Apoſtles time, otherewiſe they would not have directed their Epiſtles to ſo many ſeveral Churches, in which there were different Opinions received, and very different Doctrines taught. There is indeed but one Faith in which we can be ſaved, the ſtedfaſt belief of the Birth, Paſſion and Reſurrection of our Saviour; and every Church that receives and imbraces that Faith is in a ſtate of Salvation; if the Apoſtles Preacht true Doctrine, the reception and retention of many Errors, does not deſtroy the Eſſence of a Church; if it did, the Church of *Rome* would be in as ill, if not in a worſe Condition, then moſt other Chriſtian Churches, becauſe its Errors are of a greater magnitude, and more deſtructive to Religion. Let not the Canting Diſcourſe of the Univerſality and extent of that Church, which has as little of Truth as the reſt, prevail over You; they who will imitate the greateſt part of the World, muſt turn Heathens, for it is generally believed that above half the World is poſſeſſed by them, and that the *Mahumetans* poſſeſs more then half the remainder: There is as little queſtion that of the reſt which is inhabited by Chriſtians, one part of four is not of the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, and God knows in that very Communion there is as great diſcord in Opinion, and in matters of as great moment, as is between the other Chriſtians.

I hear you do in publick diſcourſes diſlike ſome things in the Church of *England*, as the Marriage of the Clergy, which is a point that no *Roman Catholick* will pretend to be of the Eſſence of Religion, and is in uſe in many places which are of the Communion of the Church of *Rome*; as in *Bohemia*, and thoſe parts of the *Greek* Church which ſubmit to the *Roman*: And all men know, that in the late Council of *Trent*, the Sacrament of both kinds, and liberty of the Clergy to marry, was very paſſionately preſs'd both by the Emperor and King of *France*, for their Dominions; and it was afterwards granted to *Germany*, though under ſuch conditions as made it ineffectual: which however ſhews that it was not, nor ever can be look'd upon as matter of Religion. Chriſtianity was many hundred years old, before ſuch a reſtraint was ever heard of in the Church; and when it was endeavoured, it met with great oppoſition, and was never ſubmitted to. And as the poſitive Inhibition ſeems abſolutely unlawful, ſo the Inconveniences which reſult from thence, will upon a juſt diſquiſition be found ſuperiour to thoſe which attend the liberty, which Chriſtian Religion permits. Thoſe Arguments which are not ſtrong enough to draw perſons from the *Roman* Communion, into that of the Church of *England*, when Cuſtom and Education, and a long ſtupid reſignation of all their faculties to their Teachers, uſually ſhuts out all Reaſon to the contrary, may yet be abundant to retain thoſe who have been Baptized, and Bred and Inſtructed in the Grounds and Principles of that Religion, which are in truth not only founded upon the clear Authority of the Scriptures, but upon the conſent of Antiquity, and the Practice of the Primitive Church; and men who look into Antiquity, know well by what Corruption and Violence, and with what conſtant and continual Oppoſition thoſe Opinions which are contrary to ours, crept into the World; and how unwarrantably the Authority of the Biſhop of *Rome*, which alone ſupports all the reſt, came to prevail, who hath no more pretence of Authority and Power in *England*, than the Biſhop of *Paris* or *Toledo* can as reaſonably lay claim to; and is ſo far from being matter of Catholick Religion, that the Pope hath ſo much, and no more to do in *France* or *Spain*, or any other Catholick Dominion, then the Crown, and Laws and Conſtitutions of ſeveral Kingdoms gave him leave; which makes him ſo little, (if at all,) conſidered in *France*, and ſo much in *Spain*: And therefore the *Engliſh* Catholicks which attribute ſo much to him, make themſelves very unwarrantably of another

ther Religion than the Catholick Church professeth; and without doubt they who desert the Church of *England*, of which they are Members, and become thereby disobedient to the Ecclesiastical and Civil Laws of their Country, and therein renounce their subjection to the State, as well as to the Church, (which are grievous sins) had need have a better excuse then the meeting with some doubts which they could not answer; and less then a manifest evidence that their Salvation is desperate in that Communion, cannot serve their turn: And they who imagine they have such an evidence, ought rather to suspect that their Understanding hath forsaken them, and that they are become mad, then that the Church which is repleniſhed with all Learning and Piety requisite, can betray them to Perdition. I beseech you to consider, (which I hope will over-rule those ordinary Doubts and Objections which may be infus'd into you) that if you change your Religion, you renounce all Obedience and Affection to your Father, who loves you so tenderly, that such an odious mutation would break his heart; you condemn your Father and your Mother, (whose incomparable virtue, and piety and devotion hath plac'd her in Heaven) for having impiously Educated you; and you declare the Church and State, to both which you owe Reverence and Subjection, to be in your Judgment Antichristian: You bring irreparable dishonour, scandal and prejudice to the Duke your Husband, to whom you ought to pay all imaginable Duty, and whom I presume is much more precious to you then your own Life; and all possible ruine to your Children, of whose company and conversation you must look to be deprived, for God forbid that after such an Apostasie, you should have any power in Education of your Children. You have many Enemies, whom you herein would abundantly gratifie; and some Friends, whom you will thereby (at least as far as in you lies) perfectly destroy; and afflict many others who have deserved well of you.

I know you are not inclined to any part of this mischief, and therefore offer those Considerations, as all those particulars would be the infallible Consequence of such a Conclusion. It is to me the saddest circumstance of my Banishment, that I may not be admitted, in such a season as this, to confer with you; when I am confident I could satisfie you in all your Doubts, and make it appear to you, that there are many Absurdities in the *Roman* Religion, inconsistent with your Judgment and Understanding, and many Impieties inconsistent with your Conscience; so that before you can submit to the Obligations of Faith, you must divest your self of your Natural Reason, and common Sense, and captivate the dictates of your own Conscience, to the Impositions of an Authority which hath not any pretence to oblige or advise you. If you will not with freedom communicate the Doubts which occur to you, to those near you, of whose Learning and Piety you have had much experience, let me Conjure you to impart them to me, and to expect my answer before You suffer them to prevail over You.

God Bless You and Yours.

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